



# NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

**TODD P. GRAVES**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **21<sup>st</sup> CO-DEFENDANT PLEADS GUILTY TO ROLE IN METH CONSPIRACY**

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.** – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that an Independence, Mo., man pleaded guilty in federal court today to his role in a conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine. Today's guilty plea, Graves said, marks the final conviction in a case involving 21 co-defendants from Missouri, California and Florida.

**Rickie T. Atagi**, 34, of Independence, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Scott O. Wright this morning in Kansas City.

By pleading guilty, **Atagi** admitted that he conspired with others to distribute 50 grams or more of methamphetamine between Dec. 1, 2000, and April 22, 2004. **Atagi** also agreed to a forfeiture count of the federal indictment, agreeing to forfeit any proceeds derived as a result of the methamphetamine conspiracy, including approximately \$1 million and property located in Corona, Calif.

**Atagi** is among 21 co-defendants to plead guilty to their role in two conspiracies to distribute methamphetamine and launder funds generated by the distribution of methamphetamine to promote the continued distribution of methamphetamine and disguise the ownership of the proceeds.

**Christopher L. Earley**, 27, **Matthew G. Stansbury**, 25, **Matthew R. Klussman**, 29, **Jason M. Butler**, 29, **Guy A. Girratono**, 27, and **Joshua L. Drummond**, 25, all of Independence, Mo., **Ronald Wayne Younger**, 33, and **Garrett L. Johnson**, 41, both of Blue Springs, Mo., **Spencer La Key**, 26, of Kansas City, Mo., **Timothy A. Gorman**, 26, of Sugar Creek, Mo., and **Casey L. McElroy**, 33, Excelsior Springs, Mo., each pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute 50 grams or more of methamphetamine between Dec. 1, 2000, and April 22, 2004.

Additionally, out-of-state residents **Ivan M. Tofiga**, 29, of Corona, Calif., **Juan Ramon Perez**, 28, of Glendora, Calif., **Peti Nofogia Iosua**, 38, who is incarcerated by the Florida Department of Corrections, and **Laurie J. Pazienza**, 23, and **Matthew S. Stewart**, 28, whose addresses are unknown, also pleaded guilty to their role in the methamphetamine conspiracy.

**Tofiga, Perez, Iosua, Younger, Key, Pazienza, Girratono, Gorman, Stewart, Johnson, McElroy, Earley, Drummond, Stansbury, Klussman and Butler** also agreed to a forfeiture count of the federal indictment, agreeing to forfeit any proceeds derived as a result of the methamphetamine conspiracy, including approximately \$1 million and property located in Corona, Calif.

**Tofiga, Perez, Noel Joseph Cruz**, 30, of Duarte, Calif., **Janet Castillo Martinez**, 31, of San Diego, Calif., **Iosua, Younger, Johnson, McElroy** and **Elizabeth Ann Corley**, 23, of Kissimmee, Fla., also pleaded guilty to their role in a money laundering conspiracy. By pleading guilty, they admitted to conspiring to launder money between Dec. 1, 2000, and April 22, 2004.

**Tofiga, Perez, Cruz, Iosua, Younger, Johnson, McElroy** and **Corley** agreed to a second forfeiture count of the federal indictment, agreeing to forfeit any proceeds derived as a result of their involvement in the money laundering conspiracy.

**Jason C. Highley**, 26, pleaded guilty to a superseding information, admitting that he maintained a place of residence for the purpose of distributing, using and manufacturing methamphetamine.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael S. Oliver. This case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Jackson County Drug Task Force, the Independence, Mo., Police Department, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Corona, Calif., Police Department and the California Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement.

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This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

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